

Appendix 2

Fire Risk in Communal Areas: Equality Impact Assessment

Discussed on 30 June 2017

Present: Housing Services Manager; Planned Maintenance Manager; Neighbourhood Officer; An involved tenant

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) are used to examine what different groups of people are, or could be, disadvantaged by particular decisions.

The Council has a public sector equality duty which means that public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

Aim of the Fire Risk in Communal Areas Policy: To minimise the risk of fire in communal areas and the spread of fire; and to maintain clear access so that there is an adequate means of escape for anyone in the block at the time of the outbreak. This minimises the risk of a disaster involving loss of life or the need for a mass evacuation which necessitates rehousing those left homeless as a result of a major incident. This is to be achieved by ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, regulations and the regulatory framework for social housing.

Those affected by the Policy: Tenants, leaseholders and private tenants resident in the Council's blocks of flats, their household members and their visitors. Potentially, unauthorised occupants may also be affected. Also, our own staff (Officers and operatives), our contractors and other visitors to the block who may be there in a professional capacity (eg carers, those making deliveries, postal staff etc)

Diversity information: the Housing Service has information relating to the diversity of tenants in flats. See separate reports.

Main issues:

Tenants are now responsible for knowing the fire safety policy in their blocks.

The zero tolerance policy on storage of belongings in communal areas is to be more strictly enforced.

This will have an impact on resources: robust inspections needed, all staff must be on board with reporting, publicity on the new arrangements needed, removal costs, storage arrangements and costs, ensuring the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act is adhered to etc.

We will now be keeping information relating to the needs of people living in blocks in the fire safety log cabinets in each one. Surveys have been sent to all tenants and we have received 167 back (there are 583 flats in total)

There is a "stay put" policy at many blocks. Therefore, it is vital that all tenants in flats understand the policy for their own block. There is appropriate signage but we need to reach out to those who, for whatever reason, do not understand that.

Appendix 2

Some blocks have fire alarms; only one, at St Andrews Street, has a sprinkler system.

There was some discussion regarding the implementation of a zero tolerance policy relating to the storage of belongings in communal areas. It was agreed that this policy does not discriminate directly against anyone as it is in place to protect the health and safety of all residents in flats. This policy is also supported by the Fire Service.

Action Plan (worked up following an assessment of the diversity of the tenants in flats and how the revised policy impacts upon them)

- We must ensure that we have more information about the needs of different tenants in our blocks. **Action:** telephone those people who have not returned their forms, and then visit those who we cannot reach by telephone (Neighbourhood teams)
- The following groups of people may need assistance in order to help them to understand the fire safety policy for their blocks: those who are blind or who have sight problems; those with learning disabilities; those people whose first language is not English. **Action:** make contact with these people to ensure they understand what to do in the event of fire. We can identify them from our records. Where appropriate, liaise with support workers, other agencies or relatives. We need to provide information in other formats as appropriate. (Neighbourhood teams/ Planned Maintenance team)
- Those with mobility problems may have queries about what to do in the event of fire. **Action:** make contact with these people to ensure that they understand the policy on fire safety for their block and what they need to do in the event of an emergency. (Neighbourhood teams)
- We need to promote effective communication around fire safety. **Action:** regular updates on social media and in our tenant newsletter, Housing News 4U. (Support Services Team Leader). **All Officers** to emphasise the need for two-way communication about such matters. If a tenant is aware of a hazard left in a communal hallway by someone else, they need to tell us. We offer many different methods of contact eg telephone, email, letter, via a Councillor, social media etc. We must publicise this in the context of fire safety (Support Services Team Leader)